



# What to expect from Elders

Edit 1.2 As of 2013/05/01

## Q: What is the time commitment for being an elder?

**A:** We are suggesting the following level of commitment as the baseline, understanding that this will evolve and that different elders will have different levels of time and energy to invest depending on their season of life, work requirements, and family commitment.

### Ongoing:

- Pray for the church and the members of your care group.
- Know who the members of your care group are and become familiar with their personal journey.
- Be available by phone or email for support, care and encouragement for the members of your care group, within the appropriate boundaries.

### Weekly:

- Attend Bridge City worship most weeks and participate in church activities as available.
- Make 2-3 personal connections with church members outside of church time.
- Watch for new families at church events and help them get connected.

### Monthly:

- Participate in a monthly Elder meeting.
- Have a meal with a church member family at least once monthly.

### Other:

- Participate in the teaching goals of the church as appropriate to the elder's skills and time available. This might include preaching periodically, teaching a class, leading a group or home group, mentoring members of your care group in one-on-one meetings or other small gatherings.

## Q: What is the job description for the church elders?

**A:** The Elder Team of Bridge City serves as the central leadership of the church, and together this team fulfills the biblical responsibility to shepherd, lead, teach, equip and be an example.

## Shepherd

*Goal: That the church would be well cared for, and that every member would know they have a coach and cheerleader for their spiritual growth.*

Each elder will have a group of church participants called a care group, with the responsibility to know them and have a personal connection with them. The elder will be available (within appropriate boundaries) to provide care, encouragement and support. Together the elder team will make sure that everyone is cared for and included, that special needs are directed to the right place, and provide referrals to professional care when necessary.

### Practical Expectations:

- Each elder would be responsible for a care group no larger than 12-15 adults (and their families. Likely between 5-8 families). That responsibility would include:
  - 1 introductory meal with each family to get to know them, and then sharing a meal with that family annually with the intention of knowing and caring for them.
  - A personal check-in (phone call, email exchange, coffee, etc.) with each adult with some sustainable regularity. (For a group of 15, if an elder checked in with only 2 each week, they would be able to reach each person every 8 weeks, approx. 6 times a year.) People in early stages of discipleship or in crisis this may need more frequent connections. Others may desire less.
  - Encouraging next steps of growth in the lives of their care group including next steps of discipleship, personal growth, ministry and service.
  - Being aware of when these families are at worship and other church events. Following up with them when missing.
  - Being available (within appropriate boundaries) to these families by phone or email for care, support and encouragement.
- The elder team will counsel together as to the best ways to support and encourage specific people, so that no elder is alone in the process. Elders can call on other elders who have specialized skills to assist in caring for members of their care group as needed.
- As a team, the elders would watch for new people at church events and help them get connected -- relationally, in service opportunities, to church ministries, and into an elder care group as appropriate.

## Lead

*Goal: That the church would be well led, moving forward in mission and discipleship, and that this would happen in God-honoring and orderly way.*

The elder team together functions as the executive authority of the church body, taking into account the needs and input of the congregation, and the church's sense of God's direction for the body.

### Practical Expectations:

- The elders would meet together regularly to pray, support one another, discuss the direction of the church, conduct the business of the church, and oversee the staff, deacons and ministries of the church.
- A face-to-face meeting would happen at the frequency the elders determine is necessary. The elders could use other means (video conference, email, phone conference, online tools) to streamline communication keep meeting times sustainable.
- Individual elders may be asked to take oversight of specific projects or areas of ministry in the church, and may be asked to work with specific leaders or deacons on these projects. These responsibilities will be distributed based on gifts, time available, balance, and sustainability for the elder involved.

## Teach & Equip

*Goal: That the church would grow in the knowledge of Jesus and in understanding of how to live a life that reflects Jesus' heart and teaching.*

The elders as a team are responsible for making sure that the church is well-taught and growing. Taking into account input from the church and their own sense of God's direction, the elders will oversee the teaching direction for the church including topics for sermons, curriculum for small groups, and availability of other discipleship opportunities. Each elder will participate in the overall teaching plan in a way that aligns with their gifts, time and workload balance.

### Practical Expectations:

- Elders would be available to serve in the worship service in ways that align with their gifts and availability.

- Elders as a team would pray about and decide on teaching direction for the church.
- Individual elders would contribute to the teaching goals for the church in a way that aligns with their gifts and availability including things like preaching, class teaching, home group leading, or one-on-one mentoring.

## **Be an Example**

*Goal: That the elders would represent in their lives the authentic pursuit of Christ and attempt at living well in community as a model for the church to see the teaching of the church in practice.*

The elders as a team provide an important example and inspiration for the church. We have no expectation that elders would be "perfect Christians." Instead, we desire that the elders would live their lives of faith before the church with openness and honesty, demonstrating what it means to be a broken person coming into reconciliation with God, experiencing the transformation of the gospel, and making a difference in the world.

### **Practical Expectations:**

- Elders would have a deep commitment to their own personal spiritual growth, and be willing to talk about that process as appropriate, both lessons learned and victories, but also being honest about doubt, fear, insecurity and struggle. We are not asking our church members to be perfect or to pretend to be so, neither do we ask this of our elders. But we are asking for transparency so that all of us can learn better how to live, how to get back up when we fall, and how to practice the life of a follower of Jesus.
- As a part of their commitment to personal spiritual growth, elders would also be committed to their own emotional wellness, their physical health, and their unique path to bless and serve in the world as followers of Jesus Christ.